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Role of human resources development on small and medium enterprise: post covid-19 growth in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the role of Human Resource Development on small and medium scale enterprise post COVID-19 growth in Nigeria. It is aimed at evaluating how human resource development will impact small and medium enterprise post COVID-19 growth in Nigeria. The study used survey research design. The population of the study was made up of small and medium enterprise in Kaduna metropolis duly registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Corporate Affairs Commission. Data and information used in the study were gathered through primary source. The data were extracted through the use of structured questionnaire. The research analysed the data collected using Chi-square statistical method. The findings revealed that human resource development will strongly impact on small and medium enterprise post COVID-19 growth in Nigeria. The study also found that human resource development policies have substantial positive effect on the growth of SMEs post COVID-19. It therefore recommends that there is urgent need for SMEs in Nigeria to employ human resource development strategy in order to achieve sustainable post COVID-19 growth in Nigeria.

Key words: COVID-19, Growth, Human Resource Development, Human Resource Development strategy, Small and Medium Scale Enterprise.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) space has drastically changed recently as a result of the outbreak and rapid spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) within and across national boundaries, disrupting businesses and all works of life. The actions taken by most organisations in response to the economic situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic might have several human capital development issues for SMEs. About 80% of exigency measures taken by organisations to mitigate the direct/indirect impact of the COVID-19 pandemics disruption of businesses have implications on SMEs growth. The greatest assets of all organizations are the people (employee). It is therefore paramount for SMEs to provide their people (employee) the essential and appropriate skills to achieve the goals and aspiration of the business in the new

normal of post covid-19 workplace. Amoah (2012) avowed that in most cases organisations are only as good as the quality of employees, organisation of all kind needs people: Human capital to run the organisation.

A business can only thrive when the employees are being equipped with the necessary or appropriate training they need to perform well in their respective roles. People management is a pre-requisite for the growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria (Ofobruku et al., 2019; Jugu & Obaka, 2020). Therefore, Human resource constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations particularly Nigeria that have demonstrated poor growth in small and medium enterprise development, hence, capital and natural resources are passive factors of production (Amoah 2012). Therefore, the urgent need to investigate the role that human resource development would play on the SMEs industry becomes sacrosanct especially with the new normal being created by the global pandemic of COVID-19.

Small and medium scale enterprises have been known to be the backbone and industrial hub for development in nation building (Stokes and Wilson; 2010). Over the years, SMEs have been an avenue for job creation and empowerment of Nigerians providing about 50 percent of all jobs in Nigeria (Adebisi & Gbenga, 2013). Furthermore, Mba & Izunwanne (2014) posited that SMEs reduce poverty, guarantee even distribution of industrial development and facilitates the growth of non-oil export. According to Harbison (2013) "A nation which is unable to develop the skills and knowledge of its economy will be unable to develop anything else". Zhang, Fan, and Zhu (2014) in their discussion of high-performance work system (HPWS), posited the idea of HPWS as a set of practices which develop employees' abilities, dedication, and efficiency in order to create a competitive advantage. Perhaps if the staffs are given the necessary training to develop their skills and knowledge this will in a way lead to increase in production which would lead to better business performance and lead to higher income to the employees. Consequently, this will increase the GDP of the country which would particularly ensure better living condition, increase in output which could boost the nation's trade with other countries in international trade.

The statement of problem

Several research suggests that nearly, (50%) of new businesses fails within the first three years, and between 15% and 20% of them do not even last one year (Stokes & Wilson 2010). In different period of the year in Nigeria it has been observed that new SMEs ventures are being created, but only a few could survive as almost large number of SMEs ventures closes or dies (Ofobruku & Nwakoby, 2015; Ofobruku et al., 2019). Human resources development encompasses the process of acquiring the would-be employees and developing the employees to acquire the requisite skills, knowledge and the right attitude for the organizational growth. The new world order imposed by the covid-19 pandemic and the new normal in business environment necessitated the use of new skills, knowledge and attitude to cope with the new normal in the business environment. If the challenges posed by post covid-19 pandemic and the new normal in business places are not addressed theses will ultimately lead to the mortality of a lot of SMEs in Nigeria. Therefore, the urgent requirement for the scale up in the strategy is to equip employees with new skills for SMEs growth in Nigeria.

Hence, this study examines the role of Human resource development on small and medium scale enterprise post COVID19 growth in Nigeria.

The following hypotheses were tested:

The research objective

Established the role of HR development policy on Small and medium scale enterprise growth.

Hypothesis one

H₀: HR development policy has no significant positive impact on Small and medium scale enterprise growth

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND EMPIRICAL REVIEW

2.1. Concept of Small and Medium Scale enterprise.

The important role of human resource development on small and medium scale enterprises cannot be undermined. The peoples' management has been the bedrock of the success achieved by most businesses and indeed the SMEs over the years. Globally, numerous scholars has given several interpretations and meanings to SMEs. What characterized SMEs varies from country to country, and author to authors so also the definition of SMEs varied from one nation to another. There is not just one international perspective. The Central Bank of Nigeria (2003), defined small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) as enterprises with asset base

(excluding land) of between N5 million and N500 million and employee's strength ranging from 11 and 300. According to National Council on Industry (2003), a small-scale industry is an enterprise with total cost (including working capital but excluding cost of land) above N1.5 million but not above N50 million, employees strength ranging from 11 and 100 staff, furthermore, the medium-scale industry has a total cost (including working capital but excluding cost of land) above N50 million but not beyond N200 million trench holds, with employees strength ranging from 101 and 300 staff. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Economy, 2004) viewed SMEs as firms with fewer than 500 employees.

2.2. Concept of Human Resource Development

HRD (Human Resources Development) depict all the activities involved in the scale up employees' skills, knowledge and attitude for better employees' performance in order to achieve the organisational goals efficiently. Therefore, HRD deals with the provision together with financing employees' development (Ofobruku, et al, 2019). Furthermore, some human resources scholars has established research study which concluded that human resources development remains an essential instrument for enhancing employees knowledge, skills and work place attitude for improved organisational performance (Ofobruku & Omale, 2018; Mainoma, 2013; Robbins & Judge, 2013; Stoner et al., 2011; McKinnies, 2008; Cole, 2002).

The new normal in the work place environment as a result of the covid-19 pandemic has placed some changes on the orthodox work procedures and flow. The new normal in work place environment requires organizational employees to be re-skilled in order to perform their duties efficiently and achieve a better performance. Therefore, it is sacrosanct for human resources development issues to be taken seriously. HRD is a cocktail of procedures and not merely a set of mechanisms and techniques (Okafor et al., 2019).

2.3. Theoretical framework

The evolutionary theory of firm's growth is advocates that for firms to improve their performance the critical assets of the organisation must be optimally utilized. The theory further avowed that the human asset (employees) of the firms, must undergo strategic capacity development in order to improve productivity and organizational performance. The theory establishes that HRD is critical for the improvement of employees' productivity and performance not only in SMEs but all types of organisations.

Therefore, this study hinges upon the evolutionary theory of firm's growth, postulated by Nelson and Winter (1982). The scholars avow that what determines the growth of firms is its capacity to utilize those factors that enhance growth of firms (SMEs) especially the people (staff or employee) to boost the production process which will lead to a drastic growth of the firm. Effective procedures of capacity development that have produced improvement over time, are expected to do so in the future (Hart, 2000).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research strategy and employed the use of primary data. In order to conduct the investigation, the primary data were collected using a questionnaire. The SMEs investigated were systematically and randomly selected, with focus on SMEs that the owners depend largely on their businesses as a major source of their earnings.

In order to carry out an in-depth evaluation, this research was limited to Kaduna metropolis in Nigeria. The target population of the study comprises of formal SMEs businesses in Kaduna state metropolis. That is, the business must be registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission. For an SMEs to qualify as part of the study, the population criteria are the businesses that have survived for at least five (5) years and above, more so the proprietor earns his/her income mainly from the business (Ofobruku et al., 2019). Based on the above criteria, one hundred and seventy (170) SMEs qualified as the population of the study. Based on the population of this study, the sample size of one hundred and eighteen (118) was computed to be adequate, using sample size table 1 provided by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) this statistical technique appropriate for population size not beyond one million.

Table 1: Sample size f SMEs in Kaduna metropolis

S/N	Names	Sample Size
1	ASD motors	15
2	Hisham & Associate	20
3	Alrissalah Printing & publishing CoNig ltd	25
4	Chelleco industries Ltd	20
5	Almaum Enterprises Nig Ltd	20
6	Chanchangi Airline Ltd	30

	Total	150
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Source: Field Survey, 2021.

The authors exposed the instrument to content and face validity by giving it to six experts in the industry and three professors who are experts in the area at the Edwin Clark University in Delta state, who considered the instruments systematically to guarantee that they were in line with the objective of the research. Reliability of responses was checked using Cronbach Alpha's for internal consistency test. The result shows that the correlation of items on the questionnaire of the reliability test yielded 0.75, indicating that the instrument was reliable and suitable for this research.

The research used Chi-square analysis. In order to have an unbiased result the socio- demographical profile of the respondents were measured using nominal scale and descriptive statistical measures were also used. These comprises of the percentage measure which was used to analyse the items in the questionnaire. The chi-square analysis and cross tabulation were used to ascertain the degree of the relationship or to test the significance level between HRD and growth of SMEs. The hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square method of analysis.

Thus, the chi-square method employed in the study is

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

O_i = Observed frequency

E_i = Expected frequency

Where: -

χ^2 = Chi-square

O_i = Observed frequency

E_i = Expected frequency

Σ = Summation

N = no of observation

$I = I = \text{As } j \text{ goes to } i$

Identification of tabulated Chi-square (χ^2) tab degree of freedom

$(M) = K - 1$

Where:

K = number of different values observed (i.e number of rows in the tables)

Then we have $M = 3 - 1 = 2$

Decision Rule:

Accept the null hypothesis (H_0) if χ^2 calculated is less than χ^2 tabulated. Reject the null hypothesis, and accept (H_1) if χ^2 calculated is greater than tabulated χ^2 .

This method was used in order to make the analysis easy and to maintain the frequency distribution of the information's given by the respondent,

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND RESULTS

Table 2 Job Cadre of Respondents

Cadre	Frequency	Percentage %
Junior	100	66.6
Senior	40	26.7
Management	10	6.7
Total	150	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

Table 2 shows the cadre distribution of the questionnaire instrument to respondents. From the table 2 it can be observed that respondents in the junior cadre are more with 66.6% this is followed by senior staff cadre with 26.7% and finally 6.7% of the respondents were in the management cadre.

Table 3 shows the demographic characteristic of the respondents

S/N	Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Below 20	10	6.7
		20-30	35	23.3
		31-40	50	33.3
		41-50	25	16.7
		51-60	20	13.3
		61 and above	10	6.7
		Total	150	100
2	Marital status	Single	45	30
		Married	65	43.3
		Widow/Widower	40	26.7
		Total	150	100
3	Experience	Less than 4 years	54	36
		5-10 years	40	26.6
		11-14 years	40	26.6
		14 years and above	16	10.8
		Total	150	100
4	Gender	Male	100	66.7
		Female	50	33.3
		Total	150	100
5	Level of Education	None	8	5.3
		Primary	70	46.7
		Secondary	52	34.7
		Tertiary	20	13.3
		Total	150	100
6	Annual Income	Less than 100,000	140	93.3
		100,000-400,000	5	3.3
		400,000-600,000	5	3.3
		600,000-800,000	0	0
		800,000-1,000,000	0	0
		Total	150	100

Source: field survey, 2021

Table 3 is the descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This implies that if the employees in the SMEs are not nurtured through HRD, there is the tendency that the growth rate of the SMEs and its contribution to the economy will be low.

The implication of this result is that majority of the respondents have less than 4 years of experiences in SMEs operations and these explicitly place demand for mentoring, continuous training, learning and development. Secondly, since they possess no requisite certificate, they may not appreciate the usefulness of continuous training, learning and development.

4.1. Data analysis

The questions in the questionnaire were analysed and interpreted in table 4.

H₀: Human resource development policy has no significant positive impact on Small and medium scale enterprise growth in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Evaluation of HR development policy activities in relation to the growth of selected SMEs in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 4 shows responses on Human resources development policy and Small and medium scale enterprise growth

S/N	Questions	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Do your organisations have HR policy that encourages employees' training for improve performance in post covid-19 pandemic era?	Yes No	130 20	86.7 13.3
		Total	150	100
2	Do your organisation have HRD policy that promotes employees re-skilling for improve performance in post covid-19 pandemic era?	Yes No	140 10	93.3 6.7
		Total	150	100
3	Do your organisational policies on professional development enable employees to achieve their departmental growth objectives?	Yes No	120 30	80 20
		Total	150	100
4	Do your organisational policy on employees coaching and mentorship enable the organisation to achieve her growth goals?	Yes No	100 20	86.7 13.3
		Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey 2021

Table 4 shows the responses of the SMEs owners concerning the relationship between HRD policies and SMEs growth in Kaduna metropolis, Nigeria. The first question which looks into the organizational structure HR policy, 86.7% of the respondents who are on the majority agreed that they have an organizational structure HR policy, while 13.3% had a negative answer. On the question of whether HRD policy enable employees to work better, it was observed that 93.3% are of the opinion that HRD policy enables employees to work better while 6.7% did not agree and refute the fact that HRD policy enables employees to work better. On the question of whether organisational policy on professional development enable employees to achieve their departmental growth objectives, 80% of the respondents attest that the organisational policy on employees development enable workers to accomplish their departmental growth objectives, only but a few representing 20% refute to the fact that the organisational policy on employees development enable workers to realise their departmental growth objectives. On the issue of if

organisational policy on employees coaching and mentorship enable the organisation to achieve her growth goals as, 86.7%, of the respondents agreed that organisational policy on employees coaching and mentorship enable the organisation to achieve her growth goals while 13.3% disagreed.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

This section is concerned with the testing of the earlier stated hypothesis using Chi-square statistical model.

H_0 : Human resource development policy has no significant impact on Small and Medium Scale Enterprise growth in Nigeria.

H_1 : Question from table 4 was used to test the hypothesis.

The Chi-square formula

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

$\in \in_i$

$i=1$

$$\chi^2 = \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} = 50$$

E_i 3

Presentation of test statistics

Table 5 is arranged below to show observed frequency, (O_i) Expected frequency (E_i), deviation ($O_i - E_i$) deviation squared ($O_i - E_i$) E_i as shown in the table below.

Response	O_i	E_i	$O_i - E_i$	$(O_i - E_i)^2$	$(O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i$
Management	10	50	-40	-1600	-32
Senior	40	50	10	100	2
Junior	100	50	50	2500	50
Total	150				20

Source: Completed by the researcher (2020) from the table above

To determine the degree of freedom, the tabulated Chi-square (X^2) tab degree of freedom (M) $k-1$, then we have M as $3-1 = 2$. Assuming $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance (95% confidence level) tab 0.05 at 2 degree of freedom = 5.991

It was observed that X^2 tabulated $20 > 5.991$. The study therefore, rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that the HRD has a significant impact on SMEs growth in Kaduna, Nigeria.

5. DISCUSSION

This study examines the impact of HRD on SMEs growth in Kaduna state. The hypothesis one which stated that H_0 : Human resource development has no significant impact on small and medium scale enterprise growth in Nigeria. Based on the result in table 4 which indicated that at the significant level of 0.05 with the table value of 5.991 is less than the calculated value of 20 means that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted that HRD has significant impact on SMEs growth in Nigeria. This implies that strategic HRD on employees training would enhance SMEs development. This finding is in line with the view and position of Akeem, Folashade and Salisu (2015) the current results also agrees with some of the earlier studies in our empirical review and are also consistent with previous findings.

Hypothesis two postulated that HRD policies and activities have not significantly improved SMEs in Kaduna metropolis. Table 4.4 shows that the calculated value is 21 which is greater than the tabulated value of 5.991 at 0.05 level of significance ($21 > 5.991$), the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted which means that Human resource development policy have significantly improved SMEs growth in Kaduna, Nigeria. The findings of this study agreed and are consistent with some of the earlier studies by Fatoki (2011), Ojokuk & Sjuigbe (2015).

6. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing literature on several sector of the small and medium enterprise investigated needs proper training and development of her employees for efficient and effective performance in Nigeria. This research provides scholars and organisational leaders with a

robust, in-depth revelation for the urgent and critical needs for the practice of human resource development in running small and medium enterprise in Nigeria, as the world move into the fourth revolution from the year 2020.

Human resource development has played a vital role in the improvement and increased growth rate of SMEs in Kaduna, Nigeria. The outcome of the finding has shown that HRD functions are truly strategic partner that can have major implications on the growth and success of SMEs in any economy especially in the post COVID-19 era in all nations. Nigeria desires the growth of her SMEs in the post COVID-19 era, so as to play a pivotal role in employment generation. Human resources development is an enable strategy for the government in the post COVID-19 epoch.

Therefore, based on the findings of this study, it recommends that there is an urgent need for the applications of HRD strategy to grow SMEs in Nigeria. Where skill gaps are identified, the HRD strategy would be employed to solve the identified challenges, this would lead to increased growth of SMEs in the post COVID-19 epoch in Nigeria.

Limitation of the study and implications for future research

Due to resource constraints, this research could not investigate one state each from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. This research only focused on Kaduna state. It is recommended that future research should collect data from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria and authenticate primary data with secondary data from specific sectors of the economy in order to generalize the results.

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Conflicts of interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

Data and materials availability

All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

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